

Collins, Kenelm  
speech made forthe Eastham Historical  
Society, Eastham, MA, October 26, 1997

Eastham Historical Society-Oral Histories

1 audiocassette (ca. 90 min.) + transcript

Camp Wellfleet  
Eastham (MA) Airport  
Old Colony Railroad

This is an typescript of a speech Kenel<sup>n</sup> Collins made at the Eastham Historical Society on Sunday, October 26, 1997 at the Eastham Methodist Church.

Collie (Alice) Cook, President of the Eastham Historical Society introducing Mr. Collins: He is a second term Selectman in Eastham, He has served on a great many Town committees, was Industrial Arts Teacher at Nauset Regional High School for many years. He was born in Quincy but arrived here at the age of two weeks and is probably as close as any of us to being a native. He was one of the founders of the Eastham Historical Society and served as its first president in 1963. We owe a debt of gratitude to Ken for helping to found the Society. We have two nice museums and are flourishing. He is at present a member of the board, serving as second vice president, and he is a tremendous asset to the board because of his long association with Eastham he knows the workings of the Town and he knows which buttons to push to get things done. Tonight he's going to speak on old Eastham, Camp Wellfleet, the train and the Eastham airfield.

Ken Collins: If I had known Collie was going to announce that I was born in Quincy - I wasn't, I was born in Newton - I wouldn't have spoken tonight. My father had a business at the Poston fish pier and we lived in North Quincy and my mother's doctor who was a good friend of the family practiced in Newton so that was where I was born. If it had been a weekend I would have been born in Hyannis because every weekend we were down here and I would have been born on Cape Cod, a native. I've only been here since 1938. Nonetheless, I will tell you three stories. I taught for 21 years in the Nauset Regional High School primarily as an Industrial Arts teacher but the second year I was there the principal asked me if I would start a work study program because the dropout rate was running a little bit high - 7 or 8 percent. And I said, fine, I'll do it. He said, now, I'll leave it up to you to run it. I'll have nothing to do with it. I just want a report, I want to know how you make out. These were kids that were misfits, dropouts, non-academics and just didn't fit into any place in the high school. So, I said, great, it will be a challenge. I made up my mind I would teach these kids something. I had them one period a day, I would teach them something nobody else would teach them. So they learned something different every day for 180 days a year. That's a pretty good trick, it really is because, some of these kids - I could talk

or look up at the ceiling I'd change the subject. These kids couldn't get over that. I'd be talking to them and all of a sudden I'd go BOOM o.k. now let me tell you another story and WHA! The only problem I have and I'll leave it up to you as with the kids, sometimes I get sidetracked in my story and I can't remember where we were before I got off the track. So if I say where were we then you can tell me where we were. Anyway, back to North Quincy. Every so often my mother would take me into Boston with her and my sister to go shopping. This was when I was a kid. I hated that - Filene's Basement, Raymonds. We ate at the Salad Bowl in Jordan Marsh, things like that. The one big thing that stuck out in my life, coming up to age ten when I got down here was that we rode from North Quincy to South Station on the steam train. And from the minute I saw that steam engine I fell in love with it. It is interesting that after having seen that twelve years later I'm a Marine Engineer with an licensed steam and diesel engine license for any ship in the world any horsepower. Specifically, because of the steam engine. That's what it meant to me. So the topic I picked tonight was the railroad. I tried to tell the kids back many years ago about the railroad and the steam locomotive and one kid said, "What's a steam locomotive?" These kids weren't born when the steam locomotive died. None the less, we came down in 1938 and I was intrigued by the locomotive. My stomping ground - we lived near the rotary - was the Lamont Smith property which is not conservation property in South Eastham. The western border of which was the railroad tracks, now the Bike Path. So I had firsthand opportunity to see my engines, as they went past. In 1939 I remember the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroad had a streamliner called the Zephyr. A streamlined train in 1939 was something unheard of. Had the slanted nose on it, the rounded sides, rounded top windows in front, four cars and the last one, I can see it now, had glass rounded all around the back. Fantastic piece of equipment and run by a diesel engine. This was extraordinary because diesels weren't on the rails at that time. It came down, stopped in Plymouth, stopped in Hyannis, stopped in Orleans - some speeches were made, it stayed about half an hour and then went on down to Provincetown and came back. That was one of the big highlights because what was in 1939, almost 60 years ago and the U.S. to this day AMTRAK has nothing that looks like that Zephyr. They look like freight engines, they double them up any way they want to. Same thing you can see in a railroad yard somewhere. It made a big impression on me. I used to go over in the back area of the Lamont Smith property, as I said, to see if

I could be by the tracks when the train went by. The first time I was there I stood beside the track and when I saw him coming down the track I waved at him and the guy saw me and he thinking I might run onto the track, he blows the whistle twice and I thought, oh boy, this is great. Every time after that I'd stand there and wave at him and he'd blow the whistle. In 1939 I went up to the railroad station in Orleans because father was expecting an engine he ordered from Boston to come down by rail and the engine was sitting there alongside the station and the engineer leaned out and said, "Hey, Red, aren't you that kid that waves at us alongside the track?" I said, "Yeah". and he said "Come aboard, let me show you around.". I'll tell you for a kid who was eleven years old to climb up into the cab of a steam engine was fantastic. The gauges, the throttle, brakes, whistle, the open firebox. I could see the coal burning. Everything else. I can see it to this day. I never ever forgot that. The most magical thing to a kid! That was the biggest, largest moving object there was in the world! It was a steam engine! It was interesting in those days the train used to come into Orleans on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. And then go back to Hyannis. Because there was no turnstyle in Orleans he went back to Hyannis with the coal car first then the train running backwards with the rest of the cars behind it. The engineer would hang out one side and the fireman the other to try to look past the coal car to make sure they didn't run into anything on the crossings. On Tuesday and Thursdays, sometimes on Saturday the train would go to Provincetown. In Provincetown they had a turnstyle so they could get it headed in the right direction when they went back. But on Tuesdays he'd come down and he would be carrying ten and sometimes more open hopper cars to go to Provincetown. At the far end of Pilgrim Lake, that's the body of water you see when you come out of Truro highlands, there was a big walking dune and you can still see it, although its all grown up now but if you peek over the face of the sand. It was a walking dune because the sand extends two miles beyond that would keep going over it in the easterly winds. Into that dune was a siding that belonged to the Whitehead brothers. They had a franchise from the Town Of Provincetown to dig sand out of that dune. So they pushed the cars into the siding on Tuesday and on Thursday the train would pick them up and bring them back. The engines on those are 1500 horsepower locomotives and that was not a great amount of horsepower for something that has to tow something. So, he'd tow them on Thursday night and I loved there close enough so I could hear them coming up the track on a still night and you'd hear them start to whistle

at the Bridge Road crossing, the Locust road crossing, unlighted crossing and he'd drop off a brakeman with a red lantern at each one and if he still had momentum he made it into Orleans. If he didn't, he'd had it. If you look down there where the bike path starts today and you look straight down to Governor Prence Road its straight as an arrow and it doesn't vary in elevation by more than twelve inches anywhere there but going into Orleans once you go past the Locust Road crossing it is a gradual curve and grade. With eleven sand cars behing him plus the other cars you'd hear the wheels grinding on the rails and pretty soon you'd hear him whistle and he'd back down and go back by Levi's cranberry bog , dump half the cars there and run half into Orleans put them on the siding then he'd back down again and pick up the other cars. Then he'd pick up the other cars, hook it up and then he'd take them on into Hyannis. It was very interesting.

So the railroad went along quite well but in the last of the 1940's motor transportation trucking began to pick up and when it did the railroad started going down and in 1946-47 the railroad was far enough behind so that the first thing you do when you're running short of money is neglect maintenance and so they did nothing on the railroad bed and the railroad bed really went badly. I remember it was about 1948 when the first diesel locomotive came along and standing at Gertie's Beachbox (where Arnolds is now) looking down the tracks toward Orleans you'd see that locomotive coming up the tracks by the cemetary going (tipping to one side slightly) and you'd see the railroad ties going softly up and down because they hadn't done anything on the bed. So that in the early 1950's (I was at sea at that time) but they decided to pull the track from PTown to Mike Roach's asphalt plant. Then in the year 1958, I think, they pulled the track from Roach's to South Dennis where it is now. (Someone interjected and they finally agreed it was probably the early 60's). Fred Jewell used to say, "The older I get the better my forgetting is". My long distance of 50 years ago is pretty good but yesterday afternoon - I don't know where the H I was. None the less that was a beginning of the demise of the railroad and tracks began going downhill with the beginning of the motor transport. The kids don't realize that today. I used to tell them the same story and they'd say in amazement - the train ran all the way to PTown! That was something big.

The second story I'll tell you is about Camp Wellfleet and within my speech I have a guest speaker who is going to give you a little reminiscence too. It cost me a lot of money to get him in here but it is a dynamite story. I have to give him two strings for his banjo. I think it was in the spring of 1942, now I may be off a little bit, if someone has been around and knows exactly, if it makes any difference, please speak up. The government came in and took over a piece of property that ran from Marconi site south about a mile and a half and out to Route 6 and made Camp Wellfleet. The first thing they did was to level the dune and flatten everything out almost to the highway. If you go to the observation platform at Marconi and look south you'll see that just beyond the observation platform it drops about 14-16 feet and then it levels off for about a mile and a half and then it comes back up again about where the bathhouse is. That was the firing range for Camp Wellfleet. In the summer of '42 they started a tremendous building project, building barracks, putting in foundations for dining rooms and tents and storage buildings. Fantastic operation. I think it was the fall of '42 that the first troops came in. Troops came down either from Fort Drum usually or from Camp Devens. They would come down by convoy from Camp Edwards over the road. The only road then was 6A so now you can imagine that you get a little uptight about driving 6A because of some slow driver in front of you, imagine how it was when you had 35 or 40 trucks in a convoy each one of which was towing cannons or artillery pieces or supply trucks, half tracks, army personnel carriers, medium tanks and they all come down 6A! They stayed 30-35 normally so they did a pretty good speed. If you didn't get frustrated until you got to the four lane road then they would pass and everything was fine. But they started coming in and they were supposed to be advanced anti-aircraft staging area. This was the last staging area before those troops were sent overseas. It didn't really turn out exactly that way. They'd keep coming in 35-40 a day or sometimes two sets of them a day. As someone reported in Noel Beyle's column it was a camp for thousands! There was a switch. Everytime they switched there were 700 hundred troops in a convoy so there were sometimes 1400 - 700 coming and 700 going out. I estimate there were about two to four thousand on that base at any one particular time. They say they were supposed to be advanced anti-aircraft group and shortly after it opened, they discovered that the

firing range there was much superior for artillery pieces than it was at Camp Edwards so the artillery pieces began to come in too. So, you'd have a group coming in with antiaircraft guns and 50 calibre machine guns and then you'd have another group come in with 76 Howitzer, 90 MM Howitzer and occasionally you'd get the 155's coming in. A whole company of them. They would fire. They had two sets of targets they shot at. One was a tow target about 60 feet long and wide. One white and the other one was red. The white was a light duck canvas and the red was rayon towed by a twin engine medium bomber, an army bomber. He'd come down the range, come back again, come back again. I used to come down and watch. I'd go halfway up between Nauset Light and where the bathhouse is (Marconi) and I'd perch on top of the rough there. The bomber would come down the range at about 1000-1500 feet and he'd let out this tow target behind him and he began to realize maybe they were advanced troops down there but there must have been a bunch of monkeys amongst them too because sometimes he'd let the tow target out for 300-400 yards behind him and the advanced troops did well. Then the next time he'd come down

there would be 600-800 yards behind him 'cause that was the monkey inductees who had never seen a gun before. Sure enough, one day they managed to knock out one of the engines on the tow target plane. and put it down. Anyway, I sat up there and he'd make a pass across the front of the range and they'd fire at him with these 50 calibre machine guns (showed sample of 50 calibre machine gun shells). At night these were color coded. Black was armor piercing, red was a tracer and blue was shrapnel. They'd sit there with these machine guns and fire at this tow target. If they were good at it he'd go down and make one pass and make another pass going south and by the time he got up to where I was and swung around you'd see this shredded thing hanging out of the back. That's all there was left. Occasionally he'd come back intact and he'd go back four or five times and still come back intact.

The other thing they had to shoot at for a target was a magnificent radio-controlled aircraft with a twelve foot wing span and a nine foot body on it. Made out of plywood with mahogany veneer. 3/32 mahogany veneer on plywood. Had a 75 horse two cylinder Vose engine and the thing would go somewhere over 100-150 MPH. Radio controlled. Down at the

southwest range in the woods they cut a circle 180 feet in diameter and they had an anchored post in the center of it and they put the ack ack on a track in a cradle and they put a tether on it and another tether on the rear end of it because when the thing started it had no throttle, just went wide open so the guy would step up with the battery operated devise and after about two revolutions they'd get him off from the tether and let go and step out of the way. He'd let go of the rear tether and the thing would go up and around

and cut off the guy who was controlling it was sitting on top of the bluff that is right beyond the Marconi bathhouse. He could see in the wood and see the plane come out and he'd fly up almost to the Nauset Light he'd swing it around and I was sitting there and he'd go swinging around about 100 feet above me. Then he'd drop it down in front of the bluffs and he'd fly it along until it got to him then all of a sudden he'd put it in the air like this and then he'd start firing at it. Sometimes the thing would come down to the end and come back again down to the other end. Sometimes he didn't make it the first time. The army decided at some time, some point that it would be nice if they'd salvage it because if it got hit the guy would cut the engine and the parachute would open and the thing would come down. Most of them came down in the water so the army thought, well, we should retrieve them. They brought down two amphibious jeeps, not ducks. They were the size of a jeep with a scow bow and scow stern on it and they discovered after two days and two jeeps that they didn't operate in the ocean. So they gave up the salvage deal. Occasionally one would cut out and they would go down in the woods. In 1970 when they built the high school in North Eastham, the superintendent said to me one day, tell me what this thing is I found - so I go with him up in the woods and there's one of these 75 horse engines, pretty well oxidized but you could see the control wires and everything else. The plywood was long gone but I would guarantee you ten to one odds if you started at the north field at Nauset high school right now and walked directly to the Marconi site you'd come across an arc engine somewhere in that woods because they were all over the place. They never got around to salvaging them. Camp Wellfleet lasted until - I should tell you another story because it was printed in the TCC - in 1944 a navy contingent came in and on the north end of the range they put a surveillance radar, one of those early warning systems.



There was one at Marconi, one at Block Island, one at Brunswick and the other on Montauk. These were early warning of aircraft. They were there until the fall of 1945 after the war was over. The interesting thing was one day it was either April or May of 1945 before the end of the war I was up in the Cove with my father, my father had a shellfish business there - and one of the guys said, "Bernard, what do you suppose that black smoke is?" Tremendous black column of black smoke coming up. My father said to me, "Let's go down and see what it is." We went down <sup>in the Model A</sup> and when we got past Maconi he said, "It's a ship because it's off shore. We got down to LeCount's Hollow and sure enough about a mile and a half off shore was an Esso tanker and a tremendous cloud in the air. You could see the lifeboats astern. It was a nice calm day. In those days, when you came up the coast you stayed on the coast under escort and you got to Buzzards Bay and you made convoys and the convoy went north from there. This guy, evidently decided, hell, it's almost to the end of the war, submarines all gone home, I'll sneak around the outside and nobody will know the difference. There was a German submarine out there and it let him have it right amidships. He was carrying pumper oil which is very hard to ignite but it must have been heating because they were going into Boston the next day and you have to heat this oil to unload it. The Coast Guard came out, picked up the two lifeboats and put out the fire, towed the boat to Boaton. There was a picture in the paper - I have it in my scrapbook which showed the hole in the side - it was big enough to put two giant trailers side by side driving through it easily. But you can't sink those things because oil is lighter than water and when the oil burned out it just filled back up with water and as long as you don't break the back of the ship, no problem. Towed to Boston and put new plates on the sides and away it went again.

What was intriguing was, here it was less than a mile and a half from a radar station that was supposed to detect things but it was detecting things in the air and it didn't see this. A couple of fast stories about Camp Wellfleet and then I have to get to my guest speaker. Somewhere between 1946 and 1947 there was a custodial force at Camp Wellfleet but there wasn't any real action. My father got wind that Edward Rose Snow, the renowned author was coming down to Camp Wellfleet to present a speech to a group of tourist people to see if he could get their backing to unearth the Widah, the pirate ship Widah. So I go down with my cousin in my Model A and we listen to his briefing and we were all the way down where the bathhouse is now and out in the water he had three orange buoys and he had guys on a 20 foot skiff and he had Jack Poole who was a local fisherman.

guy who had been a hardhat guy from the Navy during the war. He's out there with his hard hat and he jumped over the side and Edward Rose Snow was telling about the stuff they had found and the cannon they got off it and to this day nobody has ever found the cannon. He didn't sell anyone on it so he never pursued it. Interestingly enough, Barry Clifford comes along 10 or 12 years ago and he discovers the Widah and proves that it is a mile and a half from where Edward Rose Snow said it was. So Edward Rose Snow's con job really didn't work because it wasn't the Widah.

The other thing that happened is I used to give this lecture to the kids and explain about the machine gun shell - these (samples) and I'd say to them you know, you'll find these at Camp Wellfleet. You can to this day and if you find live ones that have been ejected from the gun because it jammed or bent or something was wrong with it you bring it in to me and let me show you how to disarm it because if you don't know what you're supposed to do with it you could kill yourself. So in 1984 a kid came in one day and said, Mr. Collins, I found this down at Camp Wellfleet. It was one of these shells and it was slightly cocked which meant it had jammed in the machine gun the machine gun had ejected it and there it lay. So, I said, o.k. let me show you how we'll disarm it. You take the shell and put it into the vice with a piece of emery paper around it and take a pair of pliers and give it a twist. Only about a third of it is black powder and to see if the black powder is any good we took the black powder and put it on an asbestos board. The cover of the shell 1942 - 42 years later. Made in the Watertown Arsenal in 1942 and still just as dangerous as it was the day it came out of the Arsenal. I told the kids if you ever find one of these bring it to me. Don't mess with it. I never saw another one after that.

I'm almost finished with Camp Wellfleet and I've got to bring up my guest speaker. Freddie Trahan. Only tell them one story at a time.

I'm Freddie Trahan of the Good Times Guys and I wish I was playing the banjo up here instead of talking. I would like to read about my experiences in regard to Camp Wellfleet and the Eastham Airfield (not yet Ken says)

I came to Wellfleet from New Bedford in 1933, a year after they had electricity. In 1934 I bought seven acres of property for \$900 in South Wellfleet from Lorenzo Dow Baker. I built a small Cape Cod cottage there. In 1940 the Defense Department established a Triple A Base in South Wellfleet known as Camp Wellfleet for training personnel and moving targets practice firing drone planes and bivouacking. In March 1941 I volunteered for the

Infantry 26th Division at Camp Edwards. I received a letter from the War Department saying they wanted a portion of my property for training and offered one dollar. Wow! that sure hit me. I was a buck private in the Army making \$21 a month! Well, I had no choice, of course but to accept the deal. I had no connections with the War Department. I now have a son who is a Colonel in the Pentagon - a little late! So I will say that after World War II they did put my property back in very good shape. Now the next one is about the Eastham airfield (Ken/Freddie you can come back for that one)

Ken again: This doesn't have to do with Camp Wellfleet but it is an aside relative to shells. In the winter of 1943 a big whale came in at Rock Harbor and right near the mouth of that harbor. Shortly after that everything turned cold and the ice began to build in Cape Cod Bay and it came in behind the whale and the whale just sat there and on sunny days it began to rot. When the wind was from the northwest in the center of town you got this smell of something and you couldn't figure out what it was until you got near Rock Harbor, you knew what it was. My father had been drafted in the war as a lieutenant in the Coast Guard Temporary Reserve in charge of all the Coast Guard Auxiliary in the lower Cape area. He had the bright idea - he called the Coast Guard and said see if you can arrange for some Navy planes - fighters - to come down here for target practice on this whale we have in the harbor. He called back and said next Sunday at 9 A.M. they will be there. So at 9 A.M. Sunday morning here come these Webcorp fighters three of them and they come down Rock Harbor Road like they were coming from the Second District Court and they opened fire with machine guns and there were six of them on each plane, three on each wing. Unfortunately they took the rock for being the whale! We were standing there watching the shot ricochet off the rocks. My father got on the phone and said, "you damned fools. That's not the whale it is 300 yards to the west." So then they came down from the center of town, that part of Rock Harbor Road and they began machine gunning the whale. They made about five passes each and Stu Findley and I were the only kids down there and that is where we picked up these shells and clips. They were all over everywhere. You look at these later and you will see that the tips on them only one is smooth the rest of them have the rifling marks where they went through the machine gun barrel. The day after they machine gunned the whale Jack Bonnell went down and picked up probably 250 of those projectiles. They were perfectly preserved because they hit the flesh of the whale. He went down and picked them out of the stinking rotten whale. It had worked

because Jack reported to father that the whole was shredded as if through

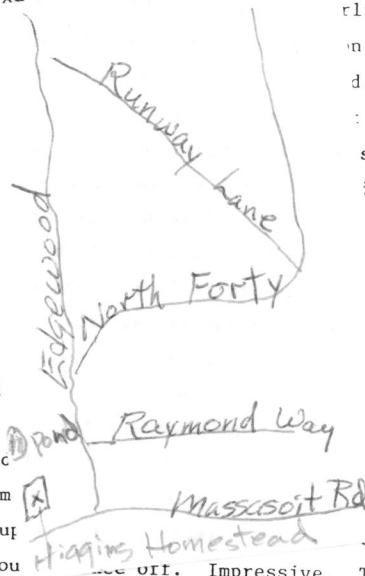
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areawas pastureland. So we went up to see what he was doing. It was Micky Eagles from Provincetown. He said he had just dropped in to see how it would be for an airfield. To consider it. Then he asked us if we would like to have a ride. There were five of us so we took turns. I was the third one to go up and when I came back down the tail wheel broke so the other two who never got a ride that day never forgave me for that. In 1946 a WWII P51fighter pilot named Wally Michewsky and a Chicago entrepreneur named Eddie Humera came in and got a lease from George Wiley for the pastureland to establish an airfield. They punched out a runway that was 1200 feet long that runs northwest southeast and they bought two champs light planes and they leased a T50 twin engine Cessna 6 passenger and established the airfield. It went over like gangbusters right away. Being right at the end of the war. George Nickerson, Arthur's brother, had a PT13 with a basic trainer from war;; Charlie Arwood had a 40 horse Piper Cub, Sumner Eddy had a Steman Voyager, someone else had a Wacco biplane. At one time there were 13 aircraft and they'd line up right here (right lower part of field). They had an administration building. I got very friendly with the fellows and the planes set out here. Airplanes always interested me. I'd go down and mow the lawns, or wash the aircraft, wash the windows in the administration building, shack or anything I could do to get a ride and I got a ride in every aircraft that ever came into that field. They flew the Cessna if he had six passengers and nobody to sit in the co-pilot seat, I would fly with him. I flew several times with him to Boston in the co-pilot's seat. I was sixteen years old and it was super! Anyway, Wally discovered that if he had seven people aboard the twin engine Cessna that 1200 feet was a little bit short so he decided he ought to put in another runway. So, somehow, I don't know how he did it, what he promised them, but but at that point the Navy had a bulldozer, a huge bulldozer down at Camp Wellfleet So he sent Eddie down there to see

if he could boondoggle them out of that bulldozer which he did. I don't know what he promised them. Anyway, they - down with a truck and they said you can have it for - lie in one day cleared that 1600 foot strip - on Runway Lane knows its down there. H - d. But when they didn't have six passen - make much money so he sent Eddie up to Bos - sort of cargo he could bring back to ti - idie found a salvage outfit in Chelsea that - red plate glass. A quarter inch thi - a deal with them to bring back temper - ws in houses. If you know the cottages my f - 28-29 every single one of them has at le - picture windows. All different sizes al - e price was right and it was super. - it is extremely strong. Wally usec - iece leaning up against the side of the adm - onstrate how strong it was by picking up - the wheel and slam it into the glass and it wou - off. Impressive. The guy who sold it to him didn't tell him never hit tempered glass on the edge. Because if you do, POW! the end pops into pieces the size of your little finger. So he and ddie were taking a piece out of the aircraft one day and Eddie kind of tilted pack on the piece and it struck a bolt woom!. Wally said, "where the hell did that glass to!" So that's the story - don't hit it on the edge. Every window but the windshield in your car is tempered glass. If the windshield was tempered glass and you had an accident you'd be dead because tempered glass doesn't give. That was an exciting one. So it became profitable and he was carrying something back and the passengers up to Boston. They were doing flight instruction, everything was going great and then - there's a side story to that. There's a guy and he's still in town and he hates me every time I tell this story. A guy named George Duffy. George Duffy's father was a plumber who lived on the corner of Bay Road and Campground. and when the second world war came along young George Duffy went into the Navy as an aviator and he was a hotshot fighter pilot flying off aircraft carriers. He tells the story about when the carrier came back to Boston and they had to get all those planes off and fly them into Squantum. George's family was living in a three decker in Arlington and when George flew



off he decided he'd go over there and tell them he was home. So he flew down inbetween the three deckers on the side, this way, all the way through the line and took everybody's clothes lines down! George was a real fine pilot and he was always arguing about who could fly the best. So one day Wally said to him, George was a weekend warrior. At the end of the war Navy aviators wanted to keep their proficiency so they would go up to South Weymouth, check out the aircraft, fly for two hours and get paid for the weekend. Good deal. So Wally said to George "I'll bet you \$50 bucks you can't get into the airfield and out with a Navy aircraft". George says "I'll take that bet. What with flying off aircraft carriers there's nothing to it." But on a carrier they put you off and when you come back the resisting cable pulls you back in. So one Sunday afternoon he comes and he's not flying a fighter aircraft he got a torpedo bomber. That's a big aircraft. Usually carries a co-pilot, a gunner, a radio operator and a thousand pound torpedo. So he comes around, the runway started right behind where the Nauset Workshop is now. He comes around and he sets it right at the end of the runway, perfect about 3 feet begging. Nothing to it. So Wally climbs up in the aircraft and shoots the breeze for about 20 minutes. Finally George says where's my \$50 bucks? Wally says you can pick it up on your way home tonight. You have to get in and you have to get out. George says o.k. He couldn't shut off the engine because these things take auxiliary power to get started. So he says, anybody ask you you don't know who it was so Wally says o.k. George sets at the end of the runway, holds the brakes, puts the flaps forward, opens the throttle wide - you could hear him in South Wellfleet, holds it until he can't anymore, lets go the brakes, down the runway he goes, you couldn't see the last corner of the runway from where we were and after he went over the crossover (where the two runways crossed) the middle Wally is saying get it up George, get it up!! . Watching that thing was like watching a 747 take off, you know damn well he can't get off the ground! its too big!. He rumbles down and Wally started jumping up and down, get it in the air! and at the last second over the pine trees comes the Avenger and he peels off and goes over the Bay back over the field at about 1,000 feet cuts the pitch on it way back, opens the throttle full, breaks two windows in the administration building and takes off over the bay. When he got back the officer wait where did you land and George says I didn't land, I know that's against regulations, Sir. You would have run out of fuel about 20 minutes ago if you hadn't landed. No Sir. Then he says where did you get those pine trees. George knew he had him. He had pull up in the wheel well? the wheels up so fast he caught the tips of the pine trees.

Well, everything went well until the winter of 1948. Eddie, his wife and Wally decided to go to Boston to see a show in Eddie's new Oldsmobile sedan. It was a cold day, it had been drizzling most of the time and it froze and it began to snow up in Sandwich going down a hill Eddie went into a spin with the Oldsmobile and she went over backwards into an elm tree and Wally sitting in the back seat was killed instantly. That was the end of it. Eddie tried to hire someone to instruct. He sold the aircraft. He took over an office in Orleans for about a year and then he went back to Chicago. Lasted 1946,47,48.

Noe Fred Trahan has a good story to tell you - better than mine.

Trahan: Up in North Eastham airfield after World War II Ken Blakesley and Walter Makowsky both former war pilots rented a cow pasture off Massasoit Road and built an airfield. I was a member of the Wellfleet American Legion. We had Saturday night dances at the Legion Hall on Commercial Street. We were looking for ways to increase attendance. It was suggested that we drop leaflets from a plane. Owing to the fact that I had a van I was selected to contact the airfield and arrange to fly from North Eastham to Orleans to PTown. I talked to Wally and met on a Saturday morning and took off in a two seater. I always loved ground speed but once I was airborne I didn't enjoy it. Just threw me up there. That was my first plane ride in a light plane. We flew to Orleans and he told me to hold the leaflets with my thumb and index finger, slide a window open and let the leaflets go. Well, I tell you. Then he asked me, do you want to see where they went? Yes, I said. And he did a loop. Well, wow, my stomach started to roll. I told him don't do that again! I proceeded to drop leaflets over Eastham, Wellfleet, Truro and PTown. Then Wally saw in the distance an old flying buddy of his, Diago. He was flying a seaplane. Wally gave me a signal then he did a barrelroll. You can imagine what that did to my stomach. I told Wally I felt like throwing up. He told me to do it in my cap which I did. We flew back to North Eastham and after we landed I told him never again. The good thing was we had record attendance at the Saturday night dance at the legion hall. About a year later my mother called from New Bedford, "Wilfred, " my mother called me Wilfred back then. My brother was named Romeo and my father was <sup>Louis</sup> Napoleon so you can see I didn't come over on the Mayflower. She said, "you have to come right away. We have a leaky water pipe." This was on a Sunday afternoon in the middle of August before the midcape highway was in existence. So to shortcut things I called Wally and said I want to fly to New Bedford airfield, but not with you. He said Charlie Atwood was a newly licensed pilot and he

thought I'd like him. I said o.k. so we took off, me and my tools and Charlie to New Bedford where my brother-in-law met us and we drove to my mother's house where I made the necessary repairs. We flew home, mission accomplished. Charlie Atwood was a real gentleman and a good flyer. I still don't like to fly. I don't have the stomach for it. I'd rather beat the hell out of a banjo with the Good Time Guys. Thank you, Ken, and its good night, Irene.

Ken: This brought to mind Charlie Atwood. Charlie Atwood was a local boy and he had a 40 horse Piper Cub. Normally they have 60 horse, so 40 horse is like a power glider. You'd have it tied down and you'd crank the propeller and step back so you don't get hit. Charlie sitting there in chocks for the wheels. Don Brewer would get on one wing and I'd get on the other one and Charlie opened up the throttle wide and we'd let go of the wing tips and it would leap out of the chocks and go into the air like a helicopter. The CAA inspector used to come through periodically to inspect these planes and Charlie's was the kind of an old plane and the inspector had this thing it was about this long, this big around and it had a wedge shape on the end of it (like a knife). He'd take it and poke it into the canvas fabric on the aircraft and if it poked in too far he'd say the fabric was bad and had to be replaced. He took this tool to Charlie's plane and the tool went right through it. So he took a knife and went zz zz right through all the fabric on the wings. The canvas. Next day, Charlie was up at Livingstons Pharmacy and got rolls of 2 inch adhesive tape and patch them all up. It was very comical to see him come down over the field with streamers from the end of the adhesive tape.

So this sort of concludes the agenda.

Questions: was there another airfield in Eastham?

Ken: On Bridge Road down to the southwest down past Jack Austin's house. That whole thing was an air strip on the Bay side. He had two aircraft. Ardent flier. He died at age 58, never smoked a day in his life. Died of a heart attack because he didn't want to take the pills for his high blood pressure because he thought it would interfere with his flying. Gog help anyone who was flying with him up in the air.

Question: The Orleans airfield, was it about the same time?

Ken: That field was later. I got my license in 1955. It was there in 1952, 53 somewhere in there.

Question: How long did it last?



Ken: Longer than Eastham's lasted longer because Bill Ketcham and Bill they had a 1200 foot strip, too. Called Skymeadow. They had a twin engine Cessna on the field. You come to the Captain Linnell House and there is a little cranberry bog on the lefthand side. The runway started immediately above that and ran down into Namskaket Marsh. 1200 feet of dirt. I got my license there with Bill Ketcham in 1955 when I got out of the Navy. He said you have to have two cross country flights. You got used to coming in over skymeadow. You had to come in over the telephone poles and drop down over the cranberry bog and hit the end of the runway. So on one of my cross country flights I flew over to Martha's Vineyard and Martha's Vinelard has 3000 feet of grass strip. So I flew in over the telephone poles like you did in Orleans and stopped in front of the administration building and the woman who ran the place said how are things in Orleans today? How you know I came from Orleans? She said everybody from there comes in over those telephone poles like you had a thousand feet. The kids come down from Norwood got 10,000 and they can't land in seven passes.

Anyway, one trip I made, Bill called me up and said I made a mistake - I offered a lady transportation to take her from Marston Mills to Charlestown, R.I. Now this is a six passenger aircraft. How would you like to get your dualtime in. I said, fine. You can drive with Doug, a young man. Doug said to Bill how much tail wind can I have to come in over the marsh? Coming in over the marsh is easy. Coming in over that pond. If the ripples are less than half way across you can come in. If they are more than halfway you can't come in. You have to do a double. So we take off, he and I with full flaps. The flaps are the protruding things on the ends of the wings that give you a lift and also brakes when you come back in. So we take off with full flaps and we get off the ground and the flaps won't come up. So now we're flying what they call slow slying - hanging on the propellers. We went this way all the way to Hyannis. The guy fixes the flaps and we take off for Marston Millspick up the girl and go to Charlestown, come back and over the park he asks what about the ripples on the pond. They are more than half way across so we can't make it. He says o.k. we'll come around and go in the other side. You call out the airspeed and the altimeter and I'll watch the aircraft. It's o.k. I'm flying. Comes in over the doesn't take more than the runway, pulls up in front of the administration building, gets out. That guy flies like a seagull. That was my experience. I went back to sea again so I never flew after that. Its too expensive to fly now.

Question about the railroad: Did you ever get involved in any of those fires they used to have along the tracks?

Ken: Not really. You'd see evidence that coal had been shoveled out periodically along the sides of the bed. The railroad was in good shape in the thirties and I don't remember any fires although when they started screeching those wheels against those rails would kick up sparks. No wrecks either. One engine tipped over one of the diesels flipped on its side just past where the midcape highway is now. They had another one in Orleans on the siding. They tried to get it back up until they broke out about fourteen feet of track and then they sent for a crane.

Question: what is the association of the railroad and Con Ele. lines?

Ken: The con ele is running on the right side to the west doesn't cross. ? were they here at the same time?

Ken: Yes. I have a story - in 1943 the Army had the bright idea they would like to run one of the Army personnel carriers over the back woods from Wellfleet to Camp Edwards without going on the road. They came along just where the Lamont Smith property is. There's a R.R. right of way there and marsh on both sides. They managed to get it as far as there and they decided they would go across the salt marsh with the Army personnel carrier that weighed 41 tons. They got almost 20 feet across and it was wet. So they sent up a tank retriever which is a humungus wrecker and they put that on and they couldn't move it so they put the old winch on and they put it on one of those highline poles and it moved that highline pole about as far as and to this day you can see it. I looked at it the other day. That was in 1943-44. The railroad was there and the poles also.

Question: couldn't hear well but something about blimps.

Ken: I don't know if I told you but the day after they torpedoed the tanker I was down at Nauset Light and there were two Navy destroyers and three blimps down there cruising around the area to see if the sub was so stupid as to be still in the area. He was probably north of Newfoundland by then.